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AUTHOR Vandervert, Larry R.
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ABSTRACT

A theoretical model is presented of student needs-to-be-satisfied that is designed to meet three interrelated criteria: (1) that the needs be related to the goals or objectives of instructors and the institutions which employ them, (2) that the satisfaction of the needs be objectively measurable on the instructor, and (3) that the needs be theoretically defendable in relation to needs college students in the classroom actually have. (DB)

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# STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION:
# SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND A PROPOSAL

By

Larry R. Vandervert

Spokane Falls Community College

Present instruments which are put into the hands of students for the purpose of evaluation of instruction strongly emphasize the instructor or professor as the critical variable in the student's learning environment. This instructor variable in instruction has become a standard source of measurable indications of student satisfaction with instruction. The instructor, both as a person and as a complex set of behaviors has been fractionalized into countless parameters of instructional performance in attempts to produce measurements of satisfaction with his performance. This situation is illustrated in common instruction evaluation instruments by such typical Likert or Likert-type scaled items as these:

Rate the manner of presentation of this instructor;

Rate the personal characteristics of this instructor;

Was the instructor enthusiastic about the subject matter of this course?

Was the instructor well prepared for class meetings?

Did the instructor present more than one view on controversial matters?

Did the instructor have a good knowledge of the subject matter of this course?

These items, even though they have become "standards," it must be admitted, have no well-founded theoretical basis related to the satisfaction of student needs other than an intuitive one – to evaluate an instructor's performance in relation to satisfying student needs one simply asks students to respond to questions about what instructors, it can be seen, *do* when they instruct. That student needs are really being satisfied is theoretically defended in this intuitive case (model) on the grounds that students *say* that these are aspects of instruction in which they are interested in being satisfied.

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This intuitive-theoretical basis has a shortcoming; it permits students to use (no doubt unknowingly) models for categories of needs-to-be-satisfied which may be quite different from categories of needs which would be germane to their reasons for being in the college classroom in the first place. For example, students might unknowingly employ an *entertainment* related model for a source of needs they feel the instructor should meet. To satisfy students, the instructor would have to meet these entertainment needs. In short, he would have to entertain. Naftulin, Ware and Donnelly (1973) have indirectly suggested the possibility of the use of this type of model by students in their Dr. Fox sham-lecture experiment. Their study suggested "that for these learners (psychiatrists, psychologists and social work educators) "style" was more influential than "content" in providing learner satisfaction" (p. 63). The entertainment model of need selection probably underlies such standard evaluation items as the first three of those presented earlier. As another example, students might unknowingly employ a *teaching method* related model for a source of needs to be met by the instructor. Here, the instructor can satisfy the needs of the student only by using the appropriate teaching method. Zelby (1974) has shown that it is possible to obtain good student-faculty evaluations (SFE's) by varying teaching methods in physics courses. What this says, of course, is that the student is evaluating the instructor, at least in Zelby's design, in terms of his teaching method and not necessarily in terms of what is being taught or in terms of what is actually being learned. The teaching method model of need selection probably underlies the last three of the standard evaluation items presented earlier. In summary and to reiterate, although entertainment and teaching method related needs of students might be important in students' satisfaction with instructors, still the satisfaction of these needs may or may not be germane to the students' reasons for being in the college classroom.

The problem which comes out of this can be stated as follows: None of the student grounded intuitive-theoretical models of needs-to-be-satisfied may be related in any rational way to first, the goals or objectives of the instructor being evaluated or of the institution which employs him, and second, to actual needs students in the college classroom have. This is a critical problem. If the needs that are to be satisfied by instructors are not demonstrably related to some goals or objectives and to actual needs of students, then

student evaluations of instruction are unfortunately destined to be a farce—a farce if they are permitted to take place; a farce they would ever be used for improvement of instruction; a farce they would ever be used to evaluate new instructors; a farce they would ever be used for reduction in force.

What is sorely needed, and what I will attempt to provide here, is a theoretical model of student needs-to-be-satisfied that is designed to meet three interrelated criteria: (1) that the needs be related to the goals or objectives of instructors and the institutions which employ them, (2) that the satisfaction of the needs be objectively measurable on the instructor, and (3) that the needs be theoretically defendable in relation to needs college students in the classroom actually do have.

## A GOAL FOR INSTRUCTORS AND THE INSTITUTIONS WHICH EMPLOY THEM

The broadest purposes (goals) of student evaluation of instruction logically should be related to the purposes and objectives which have been established in the institutions where they are used. Hopefully, what we all in higher education are ultimately interested in is *learning*. California's *Report of the Joint Committee of the Master Plan for Higher Education* (September, 1973) indicates that they are:

> "Learning is the primary purpose of California public higher education. Educational institutions exist to respond to the learning needs of citizens and society" [Chapter 1, paragraph 1 - Purposes and Objectives].

It follows from this California statement of purposes that student evaluation of instruction instruments to have validity in California would have to evaluate instruction in a way that could be shown to be related to learning. Here, it should be said, the student would be the locus of instructional evaluation, and measurements would properly be made upon the satisfaction of his learning needs through what *he* does and through what he receives as a result of what he does.

## OBJECTIVE MEASUREMENTS ON INSTRUCTORS IN RELATION TO LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

As a consequence of the emphasis upon the instructor as the appropriate source of indicators of student satisfaction with instruction noted earlier, most existing instruments which had the good intentions of being designed to measure satisfaction with the *instruction provided by an instructor* (things the instructor overtly does) turn out to be in actuality, simply instruments which measure satisfaction with the *instructor*. Theoretical shortcomings of this situation have been discussed. While a distinction between the instruction provided by an instructor on the one hand and an instructor on the other may seem trivial or benign, or may even seem to confirm the content validity of existing instruments because, after all, it seems it has been the instructor we have been wanting to evaluate, it is of tremendous theoretical significance in the construction of student evaluation of instruction instruments in general. A closer examination of this distinction will elucidate this point. This examination will break-down the distinction and will show evaluation instrument construction delimitations related to each of the conceptualizations, viz., the instruction provided by instructor conception and the instructor conception. The following five part reduction of the distinction can be made and would be pertinent to the constructions of two distinct types of evaluation of instruction instruments with two distinct measurement aims:

| **INSTRUCTION PROVIDED by instructor** | **the INSTRUCTOR** |
|---|---|
| is a process, or is processful | is a thing, state or person |
| can be related to pedagogy (body of knowledge concerning instructional practices) | relation to pedagogy is not definitive, or is unknown |
| is objectively and empirically analyzable as is therefore fractionizable | is subjectively analyzable and is therefore probably not safely fractionizable |
| is readily alterable through feedback | is not readily alterable through feedback; may be counterproductive to externally alter |

is measurable through what as a result of the instruction provided satisfies student learning needs through what the student does and through what he receives as a result of what he does (The student is the locus of instruction.)

is measurable through what the instructor does (The instructor is the locus of instruction.)

It can be seen that the two conceptualizations really do exist, and we have a choice about which one we will deal with in relation to the student. Obviously, it is the *instruction provided* by an instructor break-down that is related to students' needs that are related to learning—the proposed ultimate purpose of instructors and institutions.

## THEORETICALLY DEFENDABLE NEEDS COLLEGE STUDENTS ACTUALLY DO HAVE

In the field of personality psychology human needs in general have been examined. Broad and exhaustive categories of needs have resulted, e.g., Murray's (1936) and Schaffer's (1953). And, in the field of vocational psychology the University of Minnesota Work Adjustment Project, for an overview see Betz, et al (1966), beginning in 1959, has applied much of this theoretical and empirical knowledge of human needs to the problems of adjustment of people to their work environments. The Minnesota work adjustment studies, continuing through 1972, produced, among other questionnaires and scales, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The specific purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the satisfaction of individuals' needs through their work. This questionnaire, the result of years of extensive research in the measurement of human needs, offers an excellent advanced starting point in a determination of what *learning* needs students might have in their academic learning environment. Let us examine this advanced starting point provided by the MSQ.

The following is a list of the MSQ scales (needs) upon which is based the actual MSQ. The item following the scale title is the satisfaction measurement item which statistically best typified the scale for a group of 1,793 employed individuals, Weiss, et al (1967).

1. **Ability utilization.** The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities.
2. **Achievement.** The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job.
3. **Activity.** Being able to keep busy all the time.
4. **Advancement.** The chances for advancement on this job.
5. **Authority.** The chance to tell other people what to do.
6. **Company policies and practices.** The way company policies are put into practice.
7. **Compensatinn.** My pay and the amount of work I do.
8. **Co-workers.** The way my co-workers get along with each other.
9. **Creativity.** The chance to try my own methods of doing the job.
10. **Independence.** The chance to work alone on the job.
11. **Moral values.** Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience.
12. **Recognition.** The praise I get for doing a good job.
13. **Responsibility.** The freedom to use my own judgment.
14. **Security.** The way my job provides for steady employment.
15. **Social service.** The chance to do things for ether people.
16. **Social status.** The chance to be "somebody" in the community.
17. **Supervision-human relations.** The way my boss handles his men.
18. **Supervision-technical.** The competence of my supervisor in making decisions.
19. **Variety.** The chance to do different things from time to time.
20. **Working conditions.** The working conditions.

If these twenty scales or needs which comprise the MSQ are translated from the work environment for which they are intended to the academic environment in accordance with *learning* purpose adopted earlier and instruction provided/instructor distinction made, the following statement of preliminary academic learning environment scales or needs might reasonably result.

1. **Ability use.** Do you feel that you did things in this course which made use of *your* abilities?
2. **Learning activity.** Did you do things in this course which you feel actively engaged vou in things the course intended to teach?
3. **Learning advancement.** Do you feel that you did things in this course that improved you as a learner?

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|---|---|
| 4. Authority-communication. | Were you able to express leadership or learnings to others in this course? |
| 5. Compensation-reward. | Do you feel that you received fair credit for the amount of effort you put into this course? |
| 6. Creativity. | Did you develop or investigate some of your own inclinations in this course? |
| 7. Recognition-praise. | Were you able to do things to receive recognition of your own in this course? |
| 8. Responsibility. | Were you required to use your own judgment in some significant portion of this course? |
| 9. Parallel communication. | Were you able to help other students in the work of this course? |
| 10. Variety. | Did you do different kinds of things in this course from time to time? |

This preliminary model of needs-to-be-satisfied meets the three minimum criteria that should be met in a meaningful approach to student evaluation; related to instructional and institutional purposes (learning), objectivity in measurement (instruction provided, not instructor) and related to actual needs (learning needs) of college students. There may be other aspects of the college student's classroom experience some would like evaluated, e.g., physical facilities or the curricula of courses themselves, but we may not want to hold the instructor responsible for these things. These other aspects would have to be isolatable from what the instructor is being held responsible for—for his sake as well as for overall improvement's sake. These ten items, I think, do that. Most would agree that these ten items measure aspects of instruction for which the instructor must be responsible. And they are related to things he can readily modify without feeling he is making personal or intellectual concessions.

If a student centered instructor evaluation plan such as the one presented here were adopted by an instructor, it could affect his teaching in at least the following ways:

1. He would receive corrective feedback which would actually be usable by him. His personality would not be impugned.
2. He would be better able to distinguish between matters of content and matters of teaching method. He would be guided toward how to improve the teaching of whatever he feels is suitable to teach.
3. He would become sensitive to students' actual learning needs as well as their abilities.
4. He would identify theoretically supportable parameters of instruction that can be measured. He would be provided a supportable basis for course content re-organization and innovation.

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